

Clear Skies Op-Ed  
for Al Día Newspaper  
September 22, 2003

A New Tool for the Environment, A New Partner in Serving the Community

Richard E. Greene  
Regional Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6

For over 30 years, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has worked to achieve cleaner air, purer water and better protected land for the people of the United States. Our achievements over the years have been significant, and today we continue to work for even greater environmental protection. With innovative programs such as the brownfields program to clean up abandoned, contaminated sites, and initiatives to protect the nation's watersheds, the EPA continues on a path of progress in protecting the environment.

One of the more recent innovations proposed by President George W. Bush is the Clear Skies Act of 2003, the most significant improvement to the nation's Clean Air Act in more than a decade. This legislation would achieve mandatory reductions of 70 percent in three of the most dangerous air pollutants emitted by power plants – nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide and mercury – to reduce the harmful effects of fine particles, ozone, acid rain and mercury.

To achieve this goal, the Clear Skies Act builds upon the highly successful 1990 acid rain trading program, moving away from command and control in environmental regulation toward using the power of the market to achieve results. Through a market-based cap and trade program, federal emissions limits, or caps, are set for the power industry as a whole and emissions permits are distributed to electricity generators. Managers then have the advantage to determine the most efficient and least costly means of action to meet those limits, whether it is the sale or purchase of unused emissions allowances or the banking of emissions credits for later use.

Passing the Clear Skies Act this year would provide immediate health and environmental benefits to the American people, since the legislation provides incentives for power plants to reduce emissions early. This legislation would also benefit energy consumers by enabling power generators to continue to provide cost-effective electricity for America's energy needs.

As the EPA looks forward to a future of continuing environmental progress through initiatives such as Clear Skies, we also look forward to continuing to expand the reach of our environmental messages and services throughout the communities we serve. The EPA Region 6 office in Dallas congratulates Al Día on this, its first edition, and we welcome Al Día to the Dallas - Ft. Worth community as a new information resource for Hispanic people in the Metroplex. We look forward to building a strong relationship with this newspaper to provide your readers with the environmental information they need, and we look forward to a bright future for environmental progress.